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ABSTRACT

Contributed by high school English teachers from across the United States, the activities contained in this booklet are intended to promote the effective teaching of English and the language arts. Activities described in the first section of the booklet focus on language exploration and include familiarizing students with dictionary information, using a tape recorder to communicate with another class, taking and defending a stand on a controversial issue, and exploring the powerful and pervasive influence of the media on people's thinking. Activities in the second section are designed to stimulate an appreciation and understanding of classical and contemporary literature, and to suggest techniques for introducing literary works to students. Specific activities in this section deal with familiarizing students with emotions or themes prior to reading, stimulating analytical thinking about a literary selection, having students recreate a theme or plot in a modern setting, and suggesting alternatives to the traditional book report. Activities in the third section are intended to produce clear, concise student writing by focusing on point of view, preparing exact descriptions, creating dialogues between characters, and correcting frequently made errors. Several poetry writing assignments and two year-end activities conclude this section. (EL)

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IDEAS Plus

A Collection of Practical Teaching Ideas

Book Three

CS209363

National Council of Teachers of English
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Foreword

IDEAS Plus and its quarterly companion *NOTES Plus* are the principal benefits of NCTE Plus Membership. Earlier this year, you were sent the second edition of this collection of practical teaching ideas.

Like the second edition, the present third edition was assembled at NCTE Headquarters mainly from the teaching ideas solicited and selected by William Horst and Dianne Shaw under the sponsorship of the Secondary Section. Bill and Dianne were ably assisted by editors Margueritte Caldwell (Literature), Leila Christenbury (Language), Beverly Haley (Composition), and Skip Nicholson (Media).

Unlike the second edition, Book Three is being sent to you in the fall in the hope that there will be some teaching ideas that you can implement in your new school year.

1 Language Exploration

Language is not only the vehicle of thought, it is a great and efficient instrument in thinking.

Sir Humphrey Davy

Language helps us to construct and shape our thoughts and then to convey these thoughts clearly and concisely in oral and written formats. Even visual images are closely tied to language as viewers label and process visual stimulation. The activities in this chapter are designed to provoke critical thinking, to aid the organization and structuring of thoughts, and to stimulate self-expression by broadening vocabularies and by encouraging figurative language. The activities include familiarizing students with dictionary information, using a tape recorder to communicate with another class, taking and defending a stand on a controversial issue, and exploring the powerful and pervasive influence of the media on our thinking.

If *Pro* Is the Opposite of *Con*, What's the Opposite of *Progress*?

Suitable for any age group, this change-of-pace activity can serve as a dictionary exercise, as a way to introduce new words in a reading assignment, or as a vocabulary quiz. Students invent definitions for unfamiliar words when they first come upon the words. Three or four of these decoys are then presented along with the correct definition as a multiple-choice item. Students discuss the reasons for their guesses about right and wrong definitions and provide the "logic" for the definitions they made up. A classful of active young minds will always come up with a plausible set of decoys. And students love to let their imaginations roam because what seems to them the wildest answer sometimes turns out to be the correct one.

As a dictionary game. A student selects an unfamiliar word from the dictionary. If you wish, make a stipulation such as "Select a word that begins with the prefix *de-*." The student announces the word, and the

class members jot down their made-up definitions. The student who chose the word collects the definitions and later presents selected wrong definitions to the class along with the correct one. The game is easily adapted for team play and scorekeeping.

To introduce new words in a reading assignment. Present the new words, having planted correct definitions among the class ahead of time. Ask students to invent definitions. Randomly select four or five of their definitions for each word along with your "plant" to constitute a multiple-choice question or quiz item.

As a vocabulary quiz. Ask students to create definitions as you initially present the vocabulary words. Later, when you devise multiple-choice items for the quiz, incorporate their definitions.

Paul Felten, Homestead High School, Fort Wayne, Indiana

How Many Legs Does a Lobster Have?

We're all familiar with the problems some students have using the dictionary. They begin with one unfamiliar word and end up with several more in an incomprehensible definition. Part of the problem is the slavish copying of everything the dictionary says about a word. I have found that questions requiring a specific answer are often more useful in dictionary exercises than asking students to give the meanings of words. For example, I might ask them, "If you had a pet cormorant, what would you feed it?" Students write down only the answer, not the entire entry, and they are usually surprised to discover that the correct answer is just one word—fish.

Other kinds of questions demonstrate the variety of information found in a dictionary: What does USDA stand for? In what year did George Washington Carver die? How many people live in Oshkosh? Questions like these require students to identify the word that needs to be looked up and then to search the entry for a specific fact. More sophisticated questions can involve information from two entries, the use of etymological information, or the interpretation of illustrations: Which is older, the Republican or the Democratic Party? Who were the first people to eat salami? How tall is a moose?

Preparing a challenging set of questions is a fairly simple, even enjoyable, task. Leaf through the dictionary your class will be using, looking for an interesting word or illustration; then write a question based on one aspect of that entry. This process can also be used by students to devise questions for each other.

This exercise helps students to recognize that the dictionary is a genuine learning tool. It also teaches them how to extract information. Finally, devising questions and finding their answers makes us all realize that words are fun to explore.

Joel Goldstein, Winthrop Junior High School, Brooklyn, New York

The Dictionary as a Research Tool

Awareness of the range of information found in the dictionary precedes students' reaching for the dictionary as a research tool or when they are looking for a precise word. I use the following exercise to provide experience in using the dictionary.

I make certain that each student has a copy of the same dictionary for classroom use. I also bring in pocket, desk, and unabridged dictionaries produced by various publishers, dictionaries with different publication dates, and dictionaries containing such specialized information as new terms, slang terms, medical or psychological terms, and so on.

First I select a simple demonstration word such as *vegetable, right,* or *bear.* Students find the term in their dictionaries, and we discuss the kinds of information included in the entry. We cover every detail: the word's pronunciation (noting primary and secondary pronunciation, if appropriate), the spelling of plural or verb forms, parts of speech, etymology, abbreviations, all definitions, synonyms and antonyms, and sample sentences. I note any uses of "circular" definitions or directions to see other word entries. We look up the same word in other dictionaries and look for variations in the word's definition, pronunciation, spelling, or etymology. Some words, such as *AIDS* or *streaker,* will not appear in older dictionaries, demonstrating that our language is constantly undergoing change.

The next day each student selects a word for further research. It should be a term of special interest to the student and one that would appeal to the rest of the class as well. Allow students time to make a careful word selection. Students use their word in subsequent assignments, which can be tailored to particular student needs and teacher purposes. I have had success with the following assignments:

1. Write a historical narrative or a humorous account of your word's journey through time, perhaps projecting it into the future as well.
2. Describe your word using an analogy to something appropriate (such as *heart* and *pump*).
3. Compare your word to another word with a similar meaning (such as *fake* and *phony*).

4. Argue for or against your word's spelling, pronunciation, or use.
5. Explain your word to a second grader who is misusing it, to a lawyer, and then to a newspaper reporter, or to other people who might be unfamiliar with the word or have a special interest in it.
6. Write a paragraph about your word for the Sunday magazine section of your newspaper, for *Seventeen*, and for *Hot Rod*. Again, keep your audience in mind.
7. Describe the differences between the denotative and connotative meanings of your word.
8. Describe or narrate a personal experience related in some way to your word.
9. Explain why it would be important to define your word early in a long paper.
10. Define your word by describing what it is *not*.

Beverly Haley, Fort Morgan, Colorado

Vocabulary Building through Mythology

I use mythological names and stories to help students extend their vocabularies. The activity is particularly effective following a unit on mythology.

I present students with the names of classical gods and goddesses in several different contexts:

1. I obtain state highway maps from state tourist offices or make copies from an atlas. Students are to find and explain as many classical names or derivatives as possible.
2. I borrow from a stamp collector several modern Greek stamps with mythological subjects and mount them under plastic to prevent them from being damaged. Students are to describe the complete story depicted on each stamp and to explain any terms that might derive from characters' names.
3. I prepare a schematic drawing of the planets and their satellites: Mercury, Venus, Mars (Deimos, Phobos), Jupiter (Io, Amalthea, Callisto, Ganymede, Europa), Saturn (Mimas, Enceladus, Tethys, Dione, Rhea, Titan, Hyperion, Iapetus, Phoebe, Janus), Uranus, Neptune (Triton, Nereid), and Pluto (Charon). Students are to identify the planets and satellites, describe the origin of the planet

names, and explain how the satellite names are related to their planets.

Nancy A. Mavrogenes, Chicago Board of Education, Chicago, Illinois

Spontaneous Figurative Language

Getting students to integrate the characters, themes, and writing styles of a work of literature into their own written and oral language is a challenge. When we study poetry, I want students to recognize the creative language in Wordsworth's or Yeats's poetry and to spot similar constructions in everyday language outside their textbooks. The following assignment fosters students' use of poetic language.

I start by introducing figurative language. I write on the chalkboard such terms as *image, metaphor, simile, personification,* and *connotation* and I define them carefully, giving examples from recently read poems or from poems that I will be assigning. Next I pull out a blindfold and a large bag filled with miscellaneous everyday objects, such as a wire coat hanger, a pinking shears, a cordless telephone, a set of measuring spoons, and a spray can of deodorant.

One student in the class volunteers to be blindfolded; a second student pulls an object from the bag and determines the appropriate type of figurative language for describing that object. Argyle socks might evoke preppy images, for example, while a calculator might be better described by use of similes. Class members take turns describing the object to their blindfolded classmate. If by chance a student uses the wrong type of figurative language, I stop and review definitions. Near the end of class I allow any type of figurative language as long as students identify it correctly. When each student has described the object, the blindfolded student makes a guess at what the object is; then the class discusses the descriptions that were given.

A follow-up homework assignment I use is to have students go for a ten-minute walk by themselves. Then they are to spend ten to fifteen minutes preparing a written description of what they saw. I have them identify any figures of speech they use in their descriptions, although I do not require that they use figurative language. Instead, I try to help them see how naturally it comes when they observe their surroundings carefully. We are pleasantly surprised when we share our poetic outpourings the next class period.

Mary Johnston, Provo, Utah

Surrealistic Games

I've found an enjoyable, noncompetitive game to give students practice in making the comparisons of metaphors, similes, and analogies.

I divide the class in half and have the two groups sit with desks facing one another. I name a topic, such as something pleasant or something frightening. Students in group one each pose a question, such as "What is contentment?" or "What is trepidation?" At the same time, students in group two each write a short declarative statement, such as "It is walking through a meadow of Queen Anne's lace" or "It is a flash of lightning in an eerie black sky." Taking turns, each member of group one reads his or her question; then each member of group two responds with his or her statement. After several rounds, with me or the students naming different topics, group two members pose the questions and group one members write the statements.

The questions and statements, although not deliberately written to go together, describe the same general topic and often provide remarkably apt comparisons. This exercise gets students combining thoughts that were perhaps perceived as dissimilar at first and helps prepare students for writing their own figures of speech.

Sonja Siegrist Lutz, Glades Central High School, Belle Glade, Florida

Understanding Allusions

I started thinking about allusions when one of my students remarked, "My mother said it takes the patience of Job to put up with some folks. Just what is the patience of Job?" This question led to others, and soon we had the following list of biblical allusions:

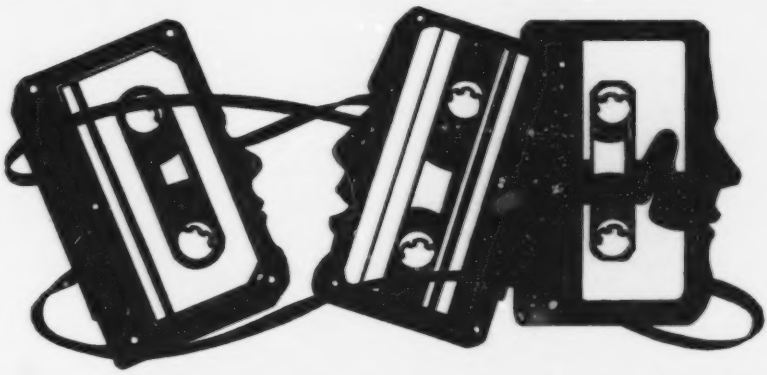
Jezebel	walls of Jericho
doubting Thomas	burning bush
Good Samaritan	tower of Babel
prodigal son	Gethsemane
Wisdom of Solomon	mess of pottage
coat of many colors	fatted calf
Judas	Goliath

We discussed the origin of each term or expression and its modern application. Students added allusions from Shakespeare and Dickens and kept a special section in their notebooks for such terms and their definitions. The lists grew and grew, and students made use of these terms in their writing assignments.

Willie Mae Crews, Birmingham City Schools, Birmingham, Alabama

Tape Pals

Many students have corresponded with a pen pal, but how many have ever had a tape pal? This assignment gives students an opportunity to practice their oral communication skills and to make new friends.



You can arrange a tape swap with a class in another state by contacting personal friends or convention acquaintances, or you might start out by using telephone directories in the public library to locate the name of a high school in a distant town and by addressing a letter to the chair of its English department.

Once the arrangements have been made, tell students that they will be exchanging recorded messages and photographs with a class in another state or in another part of the country. Emphasize that they will have the chance to learn about similarities or differences of other teenagers.

Bring in a tape recorder to class. Each student should prepare a script for a thirty-second to ninety-second speech, rehearse reading the speech, and then record it on the tape recorder. Messages might include a physical description, hobbies, personal favorites (such as food, type of date, movie, TV program), information about their hometown, and questions for their tape pals to answer.

Have each student bring in a current "mug shot," or arrange to have a student take pictures with an instant camera (or have conventional pictures processed by an overnight developer). Other students might assist in the rehearsing or taping.

When students have taped their segments and labeled their photographs to be matched to the voices, they write a joint covering letter to their counterpart class, perhaps including some information about their school or their town. Then the class waits for the tape pals to respond.

Paul S. Feinstein, Bennett High School, Buffalo, New York

Teaching Inferential Thinking

Here's an activity that helps students to become aware of inferential thinking and to realize how subjective and inaccurate inferences can be.

First I hand out a copy of Questionnaire 1 to each student and allow fifteen minutes for it to be completed.

Questionnaire 1

Do not put your name on this paper. Answer the following questions, giving your first reaction and not trying to look for the best answer. You may put down more than one answer for each item or none at all, but try to answer as many questions as possible.

1. What is your favorite TV show?
2. What is your favorite song?
3. What is your favorite movie?
4. What is your favorite expression?
5. What is your favorite color?
6. What is your favorite type of weather?
7. What is your favorite book?
8. What is your favorite sport?
9. What is your favorite smell?
10. What is your favorite sound?
11. What is your pet peeve?
12. If you were a member of a rock group, what would be the group's name?

After fifteen minutes, I collect the questionnaires, mix them up, and hand one to each student, checking that no one has received his or her own questionnaire. Next, I hand out copies of Questionnaire 2 to the students and have them fill it out overnight, basing their responses on the copy of Questionnaire 1 that they received.

Questionnaire 2

You have been given some information about a classmate. You are to use that information to make some inferences about that person as you answer the following questions. Draw the best conclusions you can and state the reasons for your conclusion. Some of you will feel more certain of your answers than others.

1. Is your classmate male or female? Why do you think so?

2. Describe your classmate's physical appearance. Why do you think so?
3. What is your classmate's favorite subject in school? Why do you think so?
4. What is your classmate's favorite food? Why do you think so?
5. What is your classmate's favorite pastime? Why do you think so?
6. Describe how your classmate's bedroom would be decorated. Why do you think so?
7. What job will your classmate have ten years from now? Why do you think so?
8. What will your classmate's home or apartment be like ten years from now? Why do you think so?

The following day, each student takes a turn at describing their classmate's responses to Questionnaire 1 and their own inferences about the classmate. Let each student conclude by guessing who the classmate is; to maintain suspense, keep the classmates' identities secret until the end. The other students might also want to try to identify each mystery classmate. The ensuing discussion should emphasize how often we make inferences without realizing it and how often these inferences are wrong or only partially correct. The discussion should touch on stereotyping and how it affects the way we communicate with and relate to others.

Mary Bozik, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa

Taking a Stand on Real-Life Issues

Students, like many of us, often follow news stories on a current issue without really taking a stand. Or perhaps they do make a decision but do so without studying the facts on both sides. The following assignment calls for careful consideration of a controversial issue and preparing a persuasive paper supporting one side in the conflict.

Bring in enough recent copies of the *Congressional Record* so that each student has a copy. (It is not necessary to have the same issue for each student.) This monthly periodical presents pro and con arguments and background information on issues currently pending before Congress. Each student is to select one controversial issue and to write a persuasive essay for or against the proposed legislation, using the *Congressional Record* for documentation. Since many of my seniors are eligible to vote, this writing experience links the classroom to real-life situations. To give students an

even clearer sense of the connection between persuasive writing and the real world, you can have them polish their essays, edit them into letter form, and send them to their senators or representatives. The assignment can also produce a lively classroom discussion, especially when several students have selected different sides of the same issue.

Sandra L. Brzezinski, Muskego High School, Muskego, Wisconsin

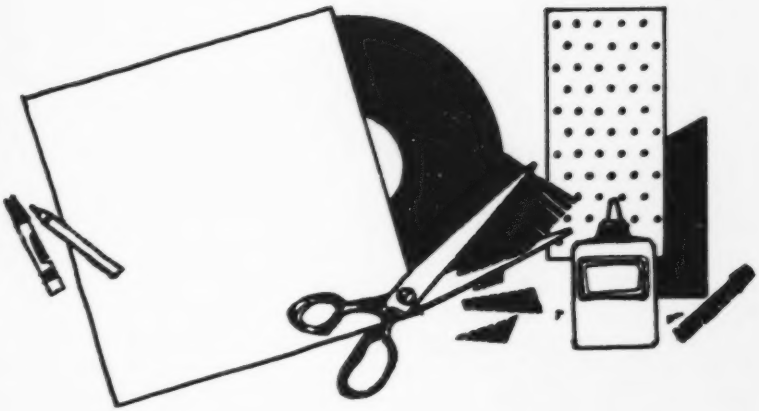
Visual Messages

Conveying messages by means of record covers demonstrates the relationship of visual images to analytical thinking and to compositional skills involving unity, organization, and creativity.

Bring some record album covers to class, perhaps selecting some older covers unfamiliar to today's teenagers, to illustrate the visual techniques used to formulate a message. Joni Mitchell's album *Hejira* ("journey" or "flight") provides many visual images relating to her lyrics. The photograph of Mitchell dressed all in black, her winglike arms flapping against the gray of the ice and sky, depicts lyrics from "Amelia": "I've spent my whole life in clouds in icy altitudes/ . . . like me she had a dream to fly/ Like Icarus ascending/On beautiful foolish arms" and lyrics from "Black Crow": "I feel like that black crow/Flying." Her photograph on the dust cover in flight against a cloudy sky repeats the image. On the front cover, a road through a bleak, arid landscape is superimposed over gray ice and sky, perhaps suggesting the line "I was driving across the burning desert" of "Amelia" and the physically and emotionally cold images of the song "Hejira"; it also relates to the images of traveling and of highways found in the lyrics of nearly every song on the album. There's much for students to see in the photographs as they study the lyrics.

Have students bring in record covers of their choice and continue the discussion of using a visual image to convey a message, using examples from other record covers. Encourage students to bring in covers to albums by a variety of performers.

As either an in-class or out-of-class assignment, ask students to design an album cover for a musical soloist or group, either real or fictitious. They are to choose a unifying theme or idea for the album and to tailor the appearance of the soloist or group to match. The title of the album and the songs should also fit that theme. Perhaps the lyrics of one song could also be included. Students need not be artists—photographs from magazines are perfectly appropriate. If students desire a collage cover, to encourage creativity I insist that no more than one element of any existing picture be used. Encourage students to use such devices as puns, figures



of speech, and personification. Also, they should keep in mind that the purpose of the album cover is to encourage sales and thus the cover should be attractive and eye-catching.

Each student presents his or her album cover, and the class discusses the images conveyed. Then I put the covers on display so that all the students can get a close-up view.

Joseph Foley, Lacombe Junior High School, Lacombe, Alberta

Editorial Cartoons

An inexpensive and widely available teaching instrument is the editorial cartoon. I use it to encourage students to spot visual manipulation, to derive inferences, and to draw sound conclusions.

I select four editorial cartoons on the same subject and group them on one page for photocopying. I distribute the cartoons to the students, and we discuss the different ways the artists have used the techniques of stereotype, caricature, and exaggeration. I point out how the humor depends on the reader's knowledge of the events or issues referred to in the cartoon. I might have the students write a paragraph comparing and contrasting the cartoons and their impact upon the reader.

Next, I have students begin collecting their own examples of editorial cartoons from newspapers or newsmagazines. Either several-panel cartoons or single cartoons can be included. The following week, students

bring their collections to class. Each student selects four cartoons and writes an essay analyzing and evaluating the cartoons.

Displaying the cartoons on the bulletin board for all to enjoy might be an appropriate conclusion to the activity and might provide the incentive for students to continue to look for editorial cartoons.

Tim Scannell, Westwood High School, Mesa, Arizona

Criticizing the Movie Critics

Movie watching is a popular teenage pastime. This activity aids students in identifying those aspects of a movie to watch for and helps them to become better critics.

Begin by having students select a current movie to see. You might permit them to choose from those at local theaters or those on cable television; allow students sufficient time to see the movie, perhaps several weeks. In the meantime, have students locate at least one review of their movie in a local newspaper or national newsmagazine. The school librarian might steer them to other reviews as well. Students should study their reviews carefully before viewing the film and should be familiar with the reviewer's comments on the plot, the theme, character development, and cinematic techniques. Students watch their film once, perhaps twice, and then write their own evaluation of the movie and a paragraph comparing their review to the written reviews.

Students enjoy seeing the films, and they benefit from the assignment by improving their skills in critical viewing and evaluation.

Sheryl B. Sherlock, Walker High School, Walker, Louisiana

Bring Back the Radio Show

The old radio play is having a bit of a comeback. Besides offering a break from so much visual stimulation, the plays help students to practice oral language skills and to hone editing and revision techniques.

I introduce the unit by bringing in and playing tapes of a few radio plays, such as "The Shadow," "Superman," and "War of the Worlds." Many of the students have not heard these plays before and react with delight and amusement. We talk a bit about the plays—what makes them exciting, how the action must be conveyed mainly through dialogue, how characters are developed, and the role of the audience's imagination in "visualizing" the events.

Next I ask students to write in their journals about a favorite novel or short story and to comment on whether the book or story might be turned into a radio play. Is there sufficient suspense? Is it melodramatic? Does the dialogue convey the action of the story? We discuss these stories in class and try to identify the ones that might be appropriate to transpose into radio plays. I bring in more stories selected from anthologies and magazines, and we spend a whole week reading and discussing stories, as students search for a good prospect for a radio play.

Students form work groups containing sufficient members to serve as actors, directors, sound-effect technicians, and production engineers. Each group discusses possible stories to turn into a radio play and makes its final selection. Have the whole class listen to more tapes of plays, or set up listening stations for small groups or individuals. Perhaps have the class work together at transposing a story. "The Pickpocket" is an easy one to transpose and familiarizes students with the actual procedures of turning a story into a play.

Students return to their work groups, and the writing begins. As the scripts evolve through trying out lines of dialogue and deciding on sound effects, transform the room into a recording studio. Establish rehearsal schedules that allow each group to rehearse in the studio for thirty minutes. Have a tape recorder available so that students can play tapes of music and those sounds that cannot be executed in the studio. Insist that all other groups work quietly on revising their scripts during rehearsals. The groups polish their scripts and prepare a final copy, to be turned in after their presentations.

Then sit back and let the show begin. Each group presents its radio play while the other students watch, listen, and enjoy. With a second tape recorder, tape each radio play to play back to the class later and to use as a sample play for next year's classes.

Catalogs that include radio plays are available from (1) Major Records, T. J. Valentino, Inc., 151 West 46th Street, New York, NY 10036 and (2) Authentic SFX, Elecktra Records, 1855 Broadway, New York, NY 10023. Short stories that have worked well for this radio unit include:

1. "Button, Button" by Richard Matheson
2. "Harrison Bergeron" by Kurt Vonnegut
3. "Two Were Left" by Hugh B. Cave
4. "The Getaway" by John Savage
5. "The Last Night of the World" by Ray Bradbury
6. "Thank You M'am," by Langston Hughes

Bill Horst, Tesdata Systems Corporation, McLean, Virginia

The Influence of Media

The media play such a dominant role in everyday life that we sometimes overlook how pervasive they are. The following activity helps students to recognize the daily impact the media have on our activities, to examine how much we depend on the media for information, and to consider the extent to which our perceptions are shaped by the media.

I have students complete the following activity sheet:

1. Mass media are a dominant force in our lives. Tell which medium you would turn to first in the following situations.
   a. You awake on Monday morning and there is snow on the ground.
   b. You want to buy a used car.
   c. Your team won the state championship on Friday night, and on Saturday morning you want the statistics of the game.
   d. You are going to spend the evening at home.
   e. You want to redecorate a room and are looking for ideas.
   f. You want to find the record of your favorite professional football team.
   g. You want to find out the specific details of a current world event.
   h. You are trying to decide whether or not to carry an umbrella around all day.
   i. You want up-to-the-minute information about a tornado watch that was put into effect earlier in the day.
   j. You are trying to decide which is the quickest route to take across town.
   k. You want to know if an escaped prisoner has been captured.
   l. You want to know what time the movie you are planning to see is showing.
   m. You want to know exactly what time it is.
   n. You want to know how serious a reported flu epidemic has become.
   o. You want to find the best price on a six-pack of your favorite soft drink.
2. Mass media bring the world into our living rooms. Tell about some memorable vicarious experiences that the media have made possible for you in the following categories.

a. Nations you visited
b. States you visited
c. Cities you visited
d. Industries you observed
e. Careers you sampled
f. Dignitaries you met
g. Eras you visited
h. Space flights you experienced
i. Violence you witnessed
j. Major events you witnessed (past, present, future)
h. Problems or controversies you have become aware of

Patricia A. Slagle, Seneca High School, Louisville, Kentucky

2 Literature

Words, when well chosen, have so great a force in them that a description often gives us more lively ideas than the sight of things themselves.

Joseph Addison

We turn to literature, both classic and modern, for enjoyment and to learn from the ideas conveyed and the manner in which they are expressed. The activities in this chapter foster students' appreciation and understanding of literary works. Some familiarize students with emotions or themes prior to reading, while others stimulate analytical thinking about a literary selection and have students recreate a theme or a plot in a modern setting. Several activities suggest alternatives to the traditional book report. Some activities pertain to specific literary works; with modification, the techniques might be applied to other novels, stories, and plays.

Sharing Common Emotions

I use journal writing to help students identify basic emotions and recognize these emotions in the short stories or novels we read.

Prior to assigning a particular literary work, I ask students to explore the emotion expressed in that novel or short story. For example, as preparation to reading Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher," I might have them write in their journals about a time when they felt afraid. Or they might enter their feelings about alienation before reading Edward Everett Hale's "Man without a Country." Students are better able to identify with the characters in strong emotional situations when they have shared these same emotions.

Here is a list of emotions on which I have had my students write. You might want to have them give more than one example from their personal life.

1. *Fear:* Describe a time when you have felt afraid. How did you deal with that fear? What was the outcome? Did you make the best choice in handling the situation? If so, what strengths surfaced in you? If not, what weaknesses showed?

2. *Anger:* Describe an instance when you have felt angry. Why were you angry? Was your anger justified? Why or why not? Could you have handled the situation more maturely? If so, what steps could you have taken? If not, describe the positive aspects that grew out of the situation.
3. *Disappointment:* Cite an instance when you have been disappointed about something. Why were you disappointed? How did you show your disappointment? Was there anything you could have done to change the situation? Explain. Who or what disappoints you the most? Why? How?
4. *Embarrassment:* Describe an instance when you felt embarrassed. Why did you feel this way? How did you handle your embarrassment? Do you agree now with your means of handling it? Why or why not?
5. *Alienation:* Describe a situation when you felt isolated and alone, separated from others. What other feelings emerged? What really caused you to feel this way? What did you observe about yourself?
6. *Power:* List five ways that you personally exercise control or power over people or situations. Describe how you feel. Evaluate your method of control and tell whether it is negative or positive. How? Then list five ways in which others have exercised control or power over you. Describe your feelings. Evaluate whether the means of control was positive or negative. How? Finally, list five times when you felt you were in control of yourself. How did you feel then? Which feelings are best? Why?

Shirley R. Chafin, Johnson Central High School, Paintsville, Kentucky

Understanding Short Story Themes

The following activity helps students to look beyond the plot and characters of a short story and to determine the theme.

I make a short list of possible theme statements for a short story the class will be reading. For example, for Jack London's "To Build a Fire," a few possible theme statements are:

1. In a direct challenge between a human being and nature, the human often loses.
2. Going it alone can be foolish rather than courageous.
3. Even very strong and powerful people are often dwarfed by nature's awesome power.

After a general discussion of the story, students form small groups. Each group receives a list of the theme statements and decides which statement best expresses the theme of the story. Or, they may decide to write their own theme statement. All the students in each group must reach a consensus and must be able to support their decision by referring to the story's plot, setting, characters, point of view, or mood.

A spokesperson from each group announces its theme statement to the class and presents the supporting evidence for the decision. Allow time for the class to respond to each group's presentation.

When students have read and discussed several stories similar in theme but different in such elements as plot, characterization, setting, and mood, have each student write a succinct statement that links the two or three stories together. Stress that this is one theme statement and that each story may demonstrate several themes or ideas.

Students then meet in small groups to discuss each theme statement. They provide supporting evidence and answer any questions other students might have about the clarity or validity of their statement. Then group members collaborate to write a single theme statement for the several stories. Each group then designs and makes a poster containing the written theme statement and an accompanying illustration. The groups display their posters, and the class discusses similarities and differences among the themes and the manner in which they are presented.

Lauren Freedman, Townsend Junior High School, Tucson, Arizona

The Case Study

In this approach to character analysis, students take on the role of psychiatrist and view characters from a novel or play as their patients.

I give students the following directions:

> Assume that you are a psychiatrist and that you have been assigned a patient who is one of the characters in the work we've just completed. You will meet with your patient three times and will try to determine this character's motives, dreams, feelings, and priorities. Then you will make a diagnosis about your patient's problems or conflicts and plan an appropriate treatment program. Use the form below to jot down notes about your patient, using descriptive lines and lines of dialogue as appropriate.
>
> 1. Description of character at first meeting
>   a. Physical appearance
>   b. Mental state
>   c. Behavior pattern

2. Background of family (hypothesize as necessary)
   a. Mother
   b. Father
   c. Siblings
   d. Home environment
3. Background of character
   a. Educational
   b. Social
4. Description of character at second meeting
   a. Physical appearance
   b. Mental state
   c. Behavior pattern
5. Description of character at third meeting
   a. Physical appearance
   b. Mental state
   c. Behavior pattern
6. Diagnosis
7. Conclusion
   a. Treatment
   b. Termination
      1. Cured
      2. Death

You may wish to specify which characters students may consider for their analysis and at which times in one story the meetings are to take place. And once the case study forms are completed, students may use them as the basis for an in-depth written character analysis.

Mamie Hoskins, formerly at Goldsboro High School East, Goldsboro, North Carolina

Literary Character Tea Party

This lively alternative to the written book report helps students enhance their skills in oral language and dramatics.

Hand out to students an invitation to attend a literary character tea party the following week. They are to select a character from a recently read book and to attend the party in the role of that character. You might limit students to literary works read in class so that all students will be familiar with the guests at the party, or you may choose to have students select a character from any book they have read. Students are to send you

a formal acceptance note indicating what character they will be. Costumes are optional but add greatly to the mood. Perhaps students could devise one or two accessories specific to their character in place of a full costume.

On the day of the tea party, have students turn in a short introductory paragraph stating what character they are portraying and what general personality traits they plan to convey. It might be advisable to group characters by century initially to give students some common ground for conversation. Have each character introduce himself or herself to a second character and indicate one pertinent fact about his or her life. The second character does likewise, and the conversation begins. Students are to remain in character throughout the party and to discuss all topics from the character's viewpoint.

Ideally, students circulate and talk to several characters, but it may be necessary to instruct students to strike up a conversation with a different character every five minutes and to announce when the students are to move on to a conversation with a new character. Circulate among the groups and, when needed, play the role of the party host introducing two people for the first time and helping them find a common topic of conversation. Encourage Christian from *Pilgrim's Progress* to discuss morality with Alex from *Clockwork Orange,* or Hester from *The Scarlet Letter* to discuss the role of women in her society with Martha Quest. Students will enjoy taking on another identity, and you can join in the conversation to determine the depth of a student's understanding of a particular character.

Mamie Hoskins, formerly at Goldsboro High School East, Goldsboro, North Carolina

Paraphrasing Dialogues

This activity reveals to students the timelessness of characters and ideas in literature written in previous centuries.

Select an important scene involving two characters in a novel, short story, or play that the class is to read. Divide the class into four groups, labeled A, B, C, and D. Ask group A to examine the lines spoken by the first character and to paraphrase each line of dialogue in modern standard English. Ask group B to do the same for the second character. Then ask group C to convert the dialogue of the first character into modern American slang; group D is to do the same for the second character. To preserve the spontaneity of real conversation in the dialogues, do not allow groups A and B and groups C and D to hear one another's rewritten dialogue or to rehearse together.

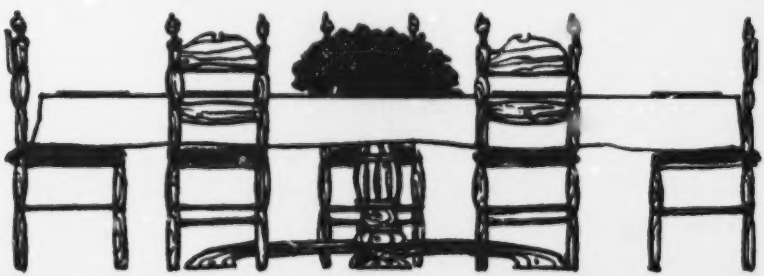
On the following day, arrange the desks in a semi-circle to give the impression of a stage and seating for the audience. Select two students to read aloud the scene as originally written while you play a selection of classical music on a tape recorder or record player. When the scene ends and the applause dies, select one member each from group A and from group B to read together their versions of the scene written in modern standard English. The groups have not heard one another's versions, so expect some humorous exchanges between characters. Play a popular modern recording during the reading. Next, have one student each from group C and from group D read their versions of the scene in modern American slang to the accompaniment of contemporary rock music. Again, each character's remarks are not known to the opposite group, so the results can be humorous. These different versions introduce students to the literary work and demonstrate varying levels of our language.

Allan J. Ruter, Glenbrook South High School, Glenview, Illinois

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?

Exploring new relationships among various literary characters can encourage original thinking and produce descriptive expository writing. I use the idea of a dinner party to bring together an assortment of characters from different works and to have them interact with one another. After students have read literary works by several different authors, I give them the following directions:

1. List nine characters from any of the short stories and novels you have read in class recently. Select characters that you would like to entertain at a dinner party.
2. All nine of your characters accept your invitation, so you are to plan the seating arrangement at the table. It might help to draw a table on your paper and fill in assignments as you make them.



3. You are the host and will sit at the head of the table. Choose a character of the opposite sex to be your cohost and to sit at the end of the table.
4. Select two honored guests. Seat one guest to your right; seat the other to the right of your cohost.
5. Arrange the remaining six guests with congenial dinner partners so that the conversation will be lively and stimulating. Avoid seating together characters who might be antagonistic to one another.
6. Write an essay in which you fully explain how you arrived at your seating arrangement and speculate about the topics of conversation that would take place around the table.

When the papers are completed, students might meet in small groups to discuss and defend their choice of characters. Then the entire class can discuss the matchup of characters and the dinner-table conversations.

I've used a variation of this activity as a final exam question. I reduce the number of guests to three or five to give students more time to analyze and explore the possible relationships among characters.

Sharon Summers, Arapahoe High School, Littleton, Colorado

Reading's Fun—Pass It On

To encourage enjoyment in personal reading and to establish behavior conducive to reading in class, my basic English students and I spend half a class period twice a week reading silently and without interruption. I first have a library resource teacher introduce students to a wide variety of young adult books and books on topics of particular interest to the students, so that they are familiar with our library's collection.

I pass out activity sheets to the students suggesting a variety of oral, written, and visual presentations they might choose to share the books they've read with the others. Students are invited to discuss with me other possible ways to report on their books. Each student must have two presentations during the quarter (with extra credit given for additional presentations), and I report on the books I am reading as well. I have found that the presentations encourage students (and me) to become great salespeople for the books we've chosen to read.

Here is a list of book presentations that have been successful for us:

1. Write or tell about the most important part of the book.
2. Describe what you like or dislike about some of the characters.
3. Dramatize a certain episode.

4. Design a book jacket with a summary on the inside flaps.
5. Rewrite the ending of the story.
6. Prepare a lost-and-found advertisement for a person or object mentioned in the story.
7. Paint or draw a mural of the story or an important scene from it.
8. Compare this book with another book you have read.
9. Make a collage about the characters or events in the book.
10. Devise a poster to "advertise" the book.
11. Draw a map showing where the story took place.
12. Tape-record a portion of the story and play it to the class.
13. Do a soap or balsa-wood carving of someone or something in the book.
14. Sketch or paint the characters as you imagine them.
15. Compose a poem about the story.
16. Design costumes that one or more of the characters might have worn.
17. Write letters as if one character were corresponding with another.
18. Point out parts of the story that show how a character has changed.
19. Give an account of what you would have done if you had been one of the characters in the same situation.
20. Write or conduct orally a "talk-show interview" with a character or the author.
21. Prepare newspaper articles about some of the characters' activities, including headlines for the articles.
22. Select two or three interesting parts to read aloud to the class and explain why they interest you.

Ellen Jo Ljung, Glenbard West High School, Glen Ellyn, Illinois

Biography through Symbols

In place of a book report, or perhaps in addition to it, I have students use symbols to interpret or demonstrate aspects of the lives they've read about in biographies or autobiographies.

Each student selects and reads a biography or autobiography—perhaps from a list of titles or of personalities I've prepared, perhaps from any of the books they see at the library or in the bookstore. When the reading is complete, each student selects three to five symbols that are associated

with his or her character. The symbols can be original photographs or artwork, photographs from magazines or newspapers, or an actual object. They can range from the obvious, such as shoelaces or a picture of a running shoe for a track star, to the obscure, such as a picture of the character's favorite food or a black dress for a character who always dresses in black. The symbols are mounted on posterboard or on separate sheets of 8 1/2" × 11" paper. Students should also include on their posters the title of the book, the author, and the subject of the biography (if not the author or part of the title). For each symbol they select, students write a paragraph explaining the appropriateness of the symbol by including concrete details from the personality's life.

On the day the assignment is due, each student explains the symbols on his or her poster to the other students. After the presentations, a display of the posters encourages students to read other biographies or autobiographies.

Alan J. Digianantonio, St. Thomas Aquinas High School, Louisville, Ohio

Book Talk

As an instructor in a program for the gifted, I am often involved in thematic units where students read a variety of books to broaden their perspectives on a given topic. The usual book reports do not encourage students to practice analysis and evaluation on a very high order and often fail to generate group discussion. Since everyone is reading a different book, it is nearly impossible to conduct a discussion that will involve everyone. Tape-recorded discussions have solved these problems for me, and I am sure the method could be adapted to many other reading and discussion assignments.

One assignment calls for students to select a book on the topic of sex-role stereotyping. I hand out a Focus Sheet similar to the abbreviated one shown below. On it I suggest criteria for selecting a book and offer several ideas to keep in mind while reading. The suggestions on the Focus Sheets must be general enough to apply to both fiction and nonfiction if both are appropriate to the topic.

Focus Sheet: Sex-Role Stereotyping

Criteria for book selection: Select a book (fiction or nonfiction) of over 120 pages that provides information about sex-role sterotyping, that tells about people in nontraditional roles, or that presents characters who do not reflect accepted stereotypes. The book should be of genuine interest to you, not one that you think I will like.

Ideas to think about as you read:

1. What stereotypes are discussed or implied in the book?
2. Do the characters dispel a general stereotype? If so, how?
3. How are nontraditional characters treated by others?
4. How do characters resolve conflict generated by nonstereotyped behavior?

After students have read and thought about their books, the class discusses general criteria for evaluating the books. The criteria might include readability, importance of the theme to their own lives, believability of characters, and so on.

Students are then grouped in preparation for their book talks. (I prefer random selection, using slips of paper numbered one through five. Students with the same number form a group.) On the day set aside for the tape-recorded book discussions, each group selects a leader to introduce speakers and to keep the discussion moving. Each member takes a turn discussing the focus idea, rating the book on the basis of the criteria set by the class, and fielding questions from other members of the group or the class as a whole. The common topic and the established criteria enhance group discussion, even though students have read different books.

I listen to these taped discussions at my leisure and take notes on what I want to tell each student or group. Then I record my comments, which students are eager to play back individually or as a group. This activity is especially well suited to a day when a substitute teacher is required. In fact, my students are doing recorded book talks today while I attend the NCTE Convention, but I won't miss a word of what went on in the classroom.

Judi Orr, Hudtloff Junior High School, Tacoma, Washington

Write Your Own Chapter

I've found that one way to help students become more analytical readers is for them to write an alternate chapter to a book. I have the assignment follow the discussion of a particular literary work so that students are aware of characteristic elements of an author's subject, theme, or style.

The class divides into small groups. Each group is to write its own chapter. (In the case of works with long chapters, the new chapter need not be as lengthy as in the original book.) The student chapters should fit into but not duplicate the work of the author. Students should stay with the original setting and add new details, such as a new room or a garden to the original house. They should involve one or more of the original characters and add

supporting characters of their own. Their story line should start with an event in the original work and then take on a new wrinkle or develop a new subplot. Students return to the original work to verify that they are being consistent.

Everyone participates in writing the new chapters since even those with shaky verbal skills can contribute ideas or suggest revisions. When each group is satisfied that its chapter is in final form, one of the students volunteers to type or recopy the chapter. The chapters can be read aloud, acted out, or photocopied for all to enjoy, with props, posters, and illustrations as welcome additions.

Narratives, poetry, and drama also are appropriate for this activity, with students writing their own chapter, stanza, or scene.

Wayne Dickson, Stetson University, DeLand, Florida

Anticipation Guides in Classical Mythology

When students approach a work of literature with a set of questions in mind, they will read with improved interest and understanding. I give students the following "anticipation guide" and ask them to keep the statements in mind as they read the Phaëthon myth. Afterward, the guide provides a good basis for discussion as students compare their own beliefs with those expressed in the myth. The activity can be adapted to other literary works, to content-area textbooks, and to films and lectures.

Anticipation Guide for "Phaëthon"

Directions to students: Before you read the story about Phaëthon, check under the column labeled *I* those statements with which you agree. After you read the story, check under the column labeled *Myth* those statements supported by the myth. Rewrite any incorrect statements to bring them into agreement with the message of the myth.

I	Myth	
_____	_____	1. You should always obey your parents.
_____	_____	2. It is very important to know who your parents are.
_____	_____	3. Gods are omnipotent; that is, they can do anything.
_____	_____	4. When your friends make fun of you, you should listen to them.

_____ _____ 5. Parents should always keep their promises to their children.

_____ _____ 6. Children want to be what their parents are.

_____ _____ 7. Horses know well if they have a strong master.

_____ _____ 8. The sun is somehow guided to rise and set each day.

_____ _____ 9. Greek myths have nothing to do with our own lives.

Nancy A. Mavrogenes, Chicago Board of Education, Chicago, Illinois

Antigone Adaptation

When my students study *Antigone,* the following assignment clarifies their understanding of the conflicts presented in Sophocles' play.

We start by reading the play and discussing the conflict of loyalty to one's family versus loyalty to the government and the conflict of retaining personal ideals versus adhering to the law. We talk about the conventions of Greek theater, and I describe three ways of presenting this Greek play:

1. *Original production:* the chorus of actors chants in unison; the characters wear masks, high wooden shoes, huge gloves, and shoulder pads; the characters sing and dance and use stylized gestures; the actors are male; bright colors are used in costumes and in sets.
2. *Traditional-contemporary production:* the sets are stark and simple; the colors are neutral; the costumes are timeless; the chorus is one all-knowing person. An example of this type of production is Jean Anouilh's *Antigone,* written in the 1940s. The themes of loyalty remain, and the play follows Sophocles' story, but the dialogue is contemporary, as demonstrated when one of the guards says, "It's no skin off my nose."
3. *Avant-garde production:* this is unorthodox or experimental theater that is not bound by rules or conventions. An example of this type of production is Julian Beck's Living Theatre production of *Antigone.* The group's productions are highly imaginative and often involve improvisation and spectator participation.

Once students are familiar with these different types of dramatic presentations, I tell students that they are going to write an adaptation of a Greek tragedy. I make the following assignment:

1. You are a young playwright who admires Greek tragedy. You are to select one of the following conflicts as the theme of your next play.
   a. A young bride discovers that her husband is the heir to leadership of a crime-syndicate family. He is loving and generous to her, but he participates in corrupt and illegal activities, including murder. What does she do?
   b. A son learns that his loving father is an ex-Nazi and that Nazi-hunters are now on his trail. Does the son reveal the father's true identity when an international investigation begins?
   c. A father finds out that his daughter has stolen cosmetics and clothes from an expensive department store. Does he inform the police that his daughter is a shoplifter?
   d. A son learns that his father knowingly manufactured defective airplane parts during the Vietnam War, resulting in the deaths of many fliers. The government is beginning an investigation. Does the son reveal what he knows?
   e. Another conflict of your own choice (subject to approval by your instructor) that demonstrates the conflict of loyalty to the government versus loyalty to one's family, or personal ideals versus laws of the government.
2. Write a letter to an influential producer trying to convince him or her to sponsor your production.
   a. State the main conflict of your play in the first sentence of your letter.
   b. Tell what overall feeling you hope to achieve in your production. Will your play be similar in spirit to the original Greek tragedy of *Antigone*, to most contemporary productions, or to avant-garde productions?
   c. Tell what you have taken from ancient Greek tragedies. Will you adhere to Aristotle's unities? Will there be a chorus? a messenger? a sentry?
   d. How will you develop your characters? Will they be archetypes? Will there be a tragic hero? What is his or her flaw? Will there be many-faceted modern characters? Who will be the protagonist? the antagonist?
   e. Describe the setting, lighting, props, music, costumes, makeup.
3. Write out the climactic scene in your play, the point at which emotion is most intense. Follow the format of Sophocles' *Antigone* for listing the names of speakers and their lines of dialogue. Remember that

each character's remarks must be appropriate to the tone of your production and consistent with his or her character.

4. Create an attractive advertisement or poster for a production of your play. Include the title and the names of the actors, the playwright, and the director.

I establish intermediate deadlines for steps 1 through 3. I find students are better prepared to write the scene in step 3 once they have completed step 2. Evaluation of step 3 includes presentations of the scenes.

Judith Solar, Dana Hall, Wellesley, Massachusetts

Camelot Revisited

The King Arthur legends can serve as the basis of a student-developed publication. Students learn more about these legends, and they gain experience in publishing as well.

Begin by conducting a class discussion on the literary heritage of a particular culture. Stress that oral and written legends and myths provide a way to explain the unexplainable, to indoctrinate people with honorable or acceptable behavior models, to assume the continuity of beliefs and values, to perpetuate the culture's history, and to entertain people. Introduce the medieval legends through the characteristics of medieval romance: an imaginary setting, chivalry, a hero-knight doing noble deeds, a knight falling in love with a lady, concealed identity, and supernatural events. Have students read and analyze selections from the King Arthur legends, discussing these characteristics.

Students then incorporate the characteristics of medieval romance as they write their own legends. Their accounts should include dialogue, and they should keep in mind that they are writing for an audience of other students. If they have ideas for illustrating their legends, they should prepare sketches or jot down the ideas. When the legends are written, divide the class into small groups and assign by interest and ability (or let students select) the jobs of editor, critic, artist, layout designer, and typist or copier for each group.

Each story goes to an editor first for corrections in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Next it goes to a critic for suggestions about deletions, additions, or expansions. The legend then is returned to the author, who revises according to the suggestions. The author meets next with the artist, bringing along his or her sketches or illustration ideas. The artist uses colored ditto masters for the drawings, or makes ink or pencil sketches if the booklets are to be photocopied. The layout designer determines how

the legend and the accompanying illustration will be placed on the page and passes the legend on to the typist or copier. Each group turns in its final legends, while the artists work together to design a book cover. The legends are then ditttoed or photocopied, the pages collated, and the books assembled. Students have a new set of tales to read and critique, plus they have experienced the steps in publishing a booklet.

Joan M. Winner, Hillsboro High School, Hillsboro, Ohio

An Authentic Chaucerian Pilgrimage

Taking students on a real pilgrimage provides a fitting and fun closing to a unit on the *Canterbury Tales*. It requires an understanding of the form and content of Chaucer's work and develops students' research techniques and oral language skills. In addition, the activity fosters good public relations through the local news media.

First, plan the route for the pilgrimage. Start at a convenient meeting place, such as your school or a park. The route should be long enough to allow each participant to tell his or her tale—for example, seven miles to be covered in four hours. Plan to finish the journey at a restaurant (a fast-food franchise is best for this size of group), where the pilgrims can feast and treat to a meal their companion who tells the best tale. Another free meal might go to the pilgrim with the best costume. An alternate arrangement is for everyone to bring a sack lunch to be eaten at a park and for a parent to volunteer to transport the lunches from the starting point to the end of the pilgrimage. Select a Saturday or Sunday afternoon for the pilgrimage.

Explain to the students that as they march on their pilgrimage they will each be expected to share a tale with the others. They are to use their research skills to select a tale. Sources can be fairy tales, myths, fables, tall tales, Bible stories, or legends of local interest. Original tales may be told as well. One of my students, for example, wrote a tale in heroic couplets; the tale had a modern setting but delivered its moral in true Chaucerian fashion. Each student should also devise a costume that is appropriate to his or her tale.

Have students hand in an outline of their tale a day or two before the pilgrimage. I also ask students to rehearse reciting their tale aloud since I do not permit notes or books on the journey. Instead, students must call upon their memorization skills in true storyteller fashion.

Inform the local news media a few days in advance of the pilgrimage. The first year my classes made a pilgrimage, three local newspapers covered the trip and interviewed students, two television stations did features

on the trip, and a local radio station interrupted its programming to make remote broadcasts each time we stopped to rest.

Wayne H. Heath, D. W. Daniel High School, Central, South Carolina

Furious Feud or Raging Romance?

This writing assignment serves as a good introduction to *Romeo and Juliet.*

First, I hand out to students the following plot details:

1. Boy is madly in love with girl.
2. Boy crashes party being held in the house of his raging family enemies in order to see girl.
3. Girl thinks boy is a nerd and ignores him.
4. Boy sees another girl. He finds her more attractive and promptly falls in love with her.
5. This girl has never had a boyfriend and falls for him.
6. They find out their parents are enemies to the death.
7. Boy's friends make fun of him for going crazy over a girl.
8. Another guy asks this same girl to marry him. Her folks are delighted, but she thinks this second guy is a nerd.

I explain to students that they will be writing a story that incorporates this plot structure. They can do what they wish with the characters and the events as long as they include the plot details.

In preparation for writing the story, students first develop character sketches by completing the following steps:

1. Name and describe the first girl. Be brief, for her role is small.
2. Name and describe the boy. What does he look like? How does he walk? talk?
3. Name and describe the second girl. How is she different from the first girl?
4. Make a list of two to four other characters who will need to be included in the story. You may want to include parents or friends of the main characters, but include no more than four people. You may wish to mention such factors as their occupations, prejudices, idiosyncrasies, and problems. What makes each character distinctive?

To develop the plot, students prepare answers to the following questions:

1. Why might the two families be enemies? Think up a cause for this feud and describe the circumstances.
2. What happens? Do the boy and girl get together? Do their parents intervene? Resolve the conflict.

Then, have students write a rough draft of their story. As a homework assignment, ask them to put the first paragraph of the rough draft on an overhead transparency sheet. The next day, put each paragraph on the overhead projector and spend a few minutes discussing each. Have students identify vivid descriptive sentences and have them point out any mechanical errors they spot. Evaluate the paragraphs as story openings. All this can be done without identifying the author of each paragraph.

During the next class period, students revise and polish their rough draft, watching for such problems as repetitive sentence beginnings, mechanical errors, fragments, run-ons. Suggest that reading papers from the bottom to the top helps in spotting mechanical errors. The homework assignment for that evening is for students to prepare an error-free final draft. They exchange papers the following day to have another student proofread the paper; then they turn in the final draft.

Students are now ready to read *Romeo and Juliet.* The story line and the conflicts are familiar to them, and they realize the timelessness of this literary work.

Pat Crump, Vancouver, Washington

"Self-Reliance" in Today's World

The following activity encourages a close reading of Emerson's "Self-Reliance" and the application of Emerson's philosophy to modern-day problems.

Divide students into small groups and assign one of the following case studies to each group for discussion:

1. With her youngest child just entering junior high school, Margaret finds herself pregnant again. She does not want another child, but her husband and three teenage children are excited over the prospect of a new baby. Her feminist discussion group advises her to get an abortion without delay and to go back to college and finish her degree. Her church has strong teachings against abortion, but Margaret is not entirely sure she agrees with the church's position. What would you do if you were Margaret? What is the reasoning behind your decision?
2. Howard, a college senior, has just been accepted into the best law school in the state. His parents, his wife, and his small daughter are all ecstatic because Howard has said since childhood that he wanted to be a lawyer. Unfortunately, Howard now is not so ecstatic. He has decided, in the last few months, that he would rather teach emotion-

ally disturbed children than be a lawyer. Since he does not have a teaching certificate, he would have to go to school for another year to get the credentials needed for a job. Howard's wife, Sheila, has a rather materialistic sense of values; money is an important aspect of her identity. She would have to work to put Howard through an additional year of school, and she knows that his eventual salary will not be very high. If you were Howard, what would you do? If you were Sheila, what would you do? Why?

3. Jonathan has finally had it with college. He is tired of reading other people's opinions, listening to boring professors, and being forced into intellectual docility by the "system." After dropping all his courses, Jonathan and his friends set out for Arizona to start a community free from the pressures of academia and capitalism. He owes money to his parents for his college education so far. He has another year of car payments. Would you have made this decision if you had been Jonathan? Why? Will the new community be an improvement over the college community in its demands on Jonathan?
4. Susan and her boyfriend, David, planned on marrying when they graduated from high school. David's father owns a small grocery store and promised David a full-time job when he was out of school. Susan began thinking about college during her senior year and applied to a school several hundred miles away. She also started making wedding plans with David. In March she is offered a full scholarship to the college. If you were Susan, what would you do?

After the groups have discussed the conflicts and how to resolve them, have the class read Emerson's "Self-Reliance" with the case studies in mind. Discuss as a class Emerson's philosophy of individualism.

Then have the students return to their groups and decide what Emerson would have done in the situation in each case study. Have a member of each group explain its case study to the class, indicate the group's original decision, and discuss the decision the group feels Emerson would have made. If the decisions differ, have the students explain how and why they disagree with Emerson's philosophy.

Andy Cortage, Sage Valley Junior High School, Gillette, Wyoming

Pudd'nhead Partners

Many readers skip over the epigraph introducing a new chapter so that they can get to the "action" of the chapter. This activity helps students learn to stop and interpret each epigraph and then to relate it to the events

of the chapter. Students get practice in summarizing and sequencing as they review the main events of the chapter and learn to relate the events to the overall theme, which is usually stated in the epigraph.

Provide each student with a copy of Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and pass out a schedule for reading each chapter. Students pair up, and each pair is assigned or picks a specific chapter. The partners identify key words in the epigraph, looking up any unfamiliar words, and rephrase the epigraph in simple, everyday language. On the day when the reading schedule calls for discussion of their chapter, the partners summarize the chapter by retelling the main events in correct order, relate the events to the epigraph, and answer any questions that other students might have. A large sheet of construction paper could present an overall summary of the main events of the novel in the form of a graph or time-line. Each pair of students could add their chapter summary following the class discussion.

The following additional assignments for students can conclude the study of *Pudd'nhead Wilson:*

1. Dramatize an entertaining or exciting scene in the novel. Memorize the dialogue, devise appropriate costumes, and bring in the necessary props.
2. Draw the events of a key scene in the novel or make sketches of the two main characters, capturing as much of their personalities as you can.
3. Make a crossword puzzle using at least fifteen vocabulary words from the novel. Use a ditto master or make a clear copy for a photocopier. Include an answer sheet.
4. Research the life of Mark Twain. Give a five-minute to seven-minute impersonation of Twain, relating the most interesting highlights of his personal life and writing career.
5. Write five original epigraphs about people in the class, characters in other literary works, or public figures. Read the epigraphs to the class.

Judy Mednick, Wilson Senior High School, Long Beach, California

Marooned on a Desert Island

To promote creative thinking about the problems suggested in *Lord of the Flies*, I prepare students for the novel by having them imagine that they are the ones marooned on a desert island. I tell students to imagine that they are traveling by plane as a class when the pilot is forced to make an

emergency landing. The pilot, luggage, and plane wash out to sea, but the class members all come ashore on an uninhabited tropical island. They are dressed as they are now and have carried no equipment with them. There are no adults present, and they will have no mechanical assistance of any kind. Their only tools or implements are what they can fashion from materials on the island or in the ocean, and they must hunt and gather all their food.

Give students several minutes for this fantasy scene to become real in their minds. Then use questions such as the following to stimulate interest and thinking. Encourage all to present their ideas, stressing there is no one correct answer to any question.

Immediate Circumstances

What will be the group's first action or decision?

How will the sick or injured be dealt with? Who specifically should be assigned this task?

Is water available for drinking? Is it safe?

What provisions can be made for shelter and protection? Who should be put in charge?

What food supplies are available? How will they be gathered and prepared? Who should do this?

What tools are available? What tools can be made? Who should do this?

How might a fire be started?

Law and Social Relations

How will the group determine what laws will be established?

Who will be the overall leader of the group? How will the leadership be changed?

What laws or rules will be needed?

How will the rules be enforced? Who will enforce them?

What sanitary arrangements must be made?

What safety precautions must be taken?

Will long-distance communication be needed to reach other parts of the island? How will it be arranged?

What religion will be practiced or taught? How? Who will be involved?

What problems may arise between the sexes or because of sexual relationships?

Who will teach? Who will be taught?

How will necessary work be shared? Who will lead the various work groups?

Future Circumstances

Will marriage exist? If so, what rules will govern marriage?

What will be the necessary provisions for childbirth and for the rearing and educating of future children?

How will the increased needs for food and shelter be met?

What tools will be needed in the future? How will they be made?

Which civilized ideas and traditions are likely to be lost? Which will be maintained?

Rescue Possibilities

How will help or rescue be obtained? Who will be in charge? Will all the group members want to be rescued?

Should the group attempt a journey to another place? Why or why not?

When students have discussed and decided what course of action they would take if marooned, have them read *Lord of the Flies*. After class discussion of the novel, have students return to their hypothetical situation and compare, in small groups or as a class, their desert island to the island in the novel. Would they make any changes in their plans? What changes would they suggest for the island in the book? Other accounts such as *Robinson Crusoe* or *Swiss Family Robinson* or movies such as *The Blue Lagoon* might also affect their perception of the island in *Lord of the Flies* or of their own desert island.

Bonnie Harens, retired from Marion High School, Marion, South Dakota

American Dreams Alive

This activity helps students in deducing and inferring traits of a character or person and helps them become more proficient at oral presentations.

Read to the class an excerpt from Studs Terkel's *American Dreams: Lost and Found*, a collection of first-person accounts in which Americans of many walks of life discuss their personal hopes and dreams. Have students discuss what the particular character is like based on what he or she says and based on what the students can infer from these remarks. What

are the person's likes and dislikes? What has his or her life been like? What is his or her dream?

Then assign each student one of the characters in the book, or let students make their own selection. Have several copies of the book available, or make photocopies of the selected accounts. Ask students to think about their chosen character, again basing their analysis on what is said and on what can be inferred. Have them look at their particular character as thoroughly as they can.

Students are to prepare a five-minute to ten-minute oral presentation in which they become their particular character on their assigned day. They also are to write a paragraph summary of their interpretation of the character. Students dress as that character, or select an appropriate accessory or two. They introduce themselves to the class, talk about their life, and explain their dreams and values to the class, using speech patterns and mannerisms appropriate to the character.

One of the characters selected by a student in my class lived close to our school. He visited our class, and students were able to judge for themselves how accurate his portrayal had been.

Dianne Shaw, Chapel Hill, North Carolina

3 Prewriting and Writing

Words are like leaves; and where they most abound, much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

Alexander Pope

While at many times we struggle to encourage students to produce a sufficient amount of words in a writing assignment, at other times we, like Pope, feel a student's meaning is lost within a wordy, poorly written composition. We want to pluck out the brilliantly colored autumn leaves and discard the muddy brown ones. The activities in this chapter can help to produce clear, concise student writing by focusing on point of view, preparing exact descriptions, creating dialogues between characters, and correcting frequently made errors. Several poetry-writing assignments and two year-end activities conclude the chapter.

Personality Pen Pals

In this assignment students gain some insight into their own personalities and make inferences about the personality of a pen pal. It helps to introduce students to one another at the beginning of the school year and is a good initial writing assignment.

I begin by writing the following directions on the chalkboard:

1. Choose a nickname for yourself that reflects your personality.
2. Choose the city or town that best reflects everything you might enjoy and value in life.
3. Write an advertising slogan, a song title, or a bumper sticker that best expresses who you are.

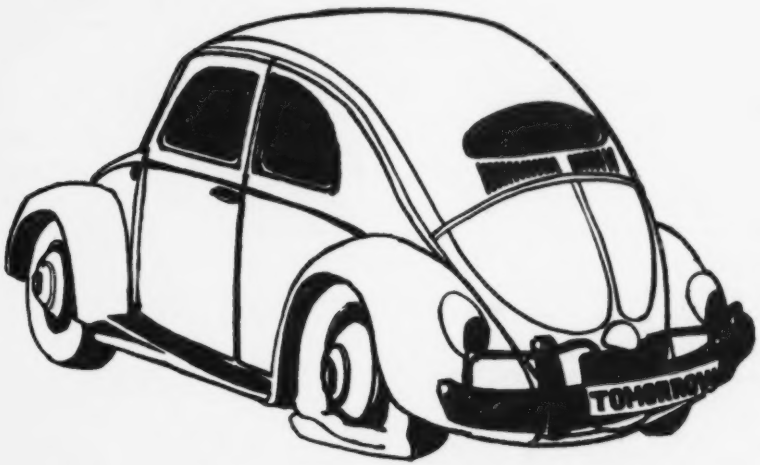
I ask students to supply the requested information and a supporting reason. One student's responses are indicated below:

1. Madame Procrastination

   I have got to be the biggest procrastinator in the country!

2. Los Angeles—a quiet section of the city
   I like the fast-paced part of life and I want to be near the beach.
3. Bumper sticker: Never do today what you can do tomorrow.
   This saying goes with my nickname.

I collect the students' responses, and before the next class I prepare a listing of the nicknames and corresponding cities and slogans, excluding the reasons for these selections.



The following day, we read over the listing, and each student selects a personality pen pal who appears somewhat similar to his or her own personality. Each pen pal may be selected by only one student to ensure that all students are paired with a pen pal, and I will fill in as a pen pal if I have an odd number of students. We talk about what information students can infer about their pen pals from the responses to the three questions, and I ask students to compose a three-part letter to their personality pen pal responding to the choice of nickname, city, and slogan, discussing inferred common interests, and asking questions to become better acquainted. I read a sample letter that could serve as a model for students.

On the third day, each personality pen pal writes a letter in response to the initial letter, commenting on other interests the two may share and identifying himself or herself. The pen pals may enjoy learning more about one another and may choose to correspond a few more times.

Judy Mednick, Wilson Senior High School, Long Beach, California

Two Sides to Everything

To stimulate thinking on a controversial issue and to help students to develop prewriting techniques for an argumentative paper, I have students take a stand on an issue and deliver a brief impromptu talk.

First I hand out small pieces of paper to students and have them write a statement about an issue that clearly has two sides. For example, "The drinking age for beer should be raised from 18 to 21," "Nuclear power plants should not be allowed to operate," or "Teenagers under the age of 18 should have a 10:00 p.m. curfew." I collect the statements and place them in a container. One by one, students draw a slip of paper and argue for or against the assertation on their paper for two minutes.

As each student presents his or her argument, the other students list the reasons given by the speaker, and then we discuss the nature of the reasons and their weight and validity. I do a little probing: How much did the speaker rely on emotion? on logical reasoning? Did he or she use "loaded" or "colored" words? What tone of voice was used? How would this tone translate into the written word? What differences are there between spoken and written language? What arguments or techniques "worked" for the speaker? What didn't? Why? What aspects of the topic did the speaker overlook or deliberately ignore? How much research needs to be done to develop the argument into a two-page to three-page paper? Where could reliable information be obtained? How could the other side of the argument be refuted successfully?

After this preliminary introduction to their topics, students are familiar with the arguments they wish to pursue and where to obtain further information. In short, they are ready for the remainder of the assignment—to prepare the argumentative paper. While I will honor requests for a new topic, most students appreciate the warm-up they get with their impromptu topics.

Mary Ann Lind, Fort Morgan High School, Fort Morgan, Colorado

The Journal: Backup and Extension

To provide students with additional practice in the writing genres we will cover during the semester, I issue a six-week schedule of journal writing. I key the daily journal topics to weekly writing assignments as shown in the following abbreviated schedule. Students may modify these topics to suit their special interests, but I ask that they select a related topic. If a topic is unfamiliar to students, they gather the necessary background information at the library.

Week One: Description

Monday: Yourself

Tuesday: A typical teacher

Wednesday: Your favorite pair of shoes

Thursday: A gothic cathedral

Friday: An imaginary town in the year 2500

Week Two: Process

Monday: How to stay in bed as late as possible but still get to school on time

Tuesday: How to compute your (grade-point average, gas mileage, etc.)

Wednesday: How _____ is made

Thursday: How a volcano erupts

Friday: How _____ works

Week Three: Definition

Monday: Procrastination

Tuesday: Friendship

Wednesday: The Black Death

Thursday: A good movie

Friday: Tidal waves

Week Four: Comparing and Contrasting

Monday: You and a friend

Tuesday: The six o'clock news and newspapers

Wednesday: Wendy's and McDonald's

Thursday: Two magazines you like

Friday: Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian columns

Week Five: Classifying

Monday: Movies

Tuesday: Whales

Wednesday: TV commercials

Thursday: Jokes

Friday: People in snack bars or restaurants

Week Six: Argument (for or against)

Monday: Jogging as a perfect exercise

Tuesday: New Wave music

Wednesday: _____ causes crime

Thursday: Diets

Friday: High school football

Students make a full-page journal entry for each class day and bring their journals to class on the days when they will be writing. The in-class composition might come directly from a journal assignment, or it might only be similar in genre. I also have students bring their journals to their individual conferences so we can go over the journal entries together.

Edelma deLeon, Appalachian State University, Boone, North Carolina

Tyranny of the Majority Tournament

I use a simple game to demonstrate the function and importance of point of view in writing. I divide the class into three groups and hand the members in each group a set of instructions:

Group 1

What luck! After hours of local play, all of you have become finalists in the Tyranny of the Majority Tournament, to be held here during the next ten minutes. You'll be competing against one another for the title of Master Tyrant.

To play, each of you will need a coin. You will flip the coins simultaneously and record points as follows: If the majority of coins turn up heads, then each of those throwing heads scores one point. If the majority of coins turn up tails, then each of those throwing tails scores one point. No points are awarded to those in the minority. If there is a tie between heads and tails, then everybody loses a point. Each person will record his or her own points, so make sure that others aren't cheating. If at any time the majority of players decide someone is cheating (no proof required), then that person loses three points. At the end of ten minutes, all players count their points, and the player with the most points becomes the Master Tyrant.

Following the tournament, each of you is to prepare a first-person story for a national magazine about playing in the tournament. The story should tell about the tournament as you viewed it and participated in it, so as you play, keep in mind all that happens.

Group 2

You are a member of a pool of reporters representing various national magazines. You've been assigned to cover the first Tyranny of the Majority Tournament, which will be starting in the next few minutes. The game involves flipping coins and tallying points. Your job is to watch the tournament as it proceeds, take notes, interview the contestants, and try to make some sense of the game. When the game is over, write an informative and interesting news story about the tournament.

Group 3

You are a member of a pool of reporters representing various national magazines. You've been assigned to cover a national tournament that will be starting in the next few minutes. There's one problem, though. The tournament hall is packed, and you can't get in to view the tournament firsthand. You'll have to piece together a story from what you see and hear from a distance (in this case, from your seats against the far wall of the room). You will not be able to get close enough to interview any of the participants, but you can use any information that you can find out from other reporters (if, indeed, they'll tell you anything since they are writing for rival magazines). When the competition is over, write a news story about the tournament. Your facts might be sparse, but make the report as informative and interesting as you can.

When the students have read the instructions for their particular group, have group 1 members assemble at one end of the room and prepare to get the tournament underway. Group 2 members will arrange themselves so that they can view the events and interview the participants. Group 3 members gather at the far side of the room, where they can only talk to other members of group 3 and take notes on what they overhear and what they see group 1 members doing. After the tournament is completed and a Master Tyrant has emerged, allow group 2 members an additional ten minutes in which to interview members of group 1. During the remainder of the class period, students write their news accounts from the perspective of their particular group.

The following day, students compare the papers, looking at the variance in factual accuracy, point of view, distance, specificity, vividness, and tone, and they learn firsthand how different points of view stimulate different writing qualities.

Gary Salvner, Youngstown State University, Youngstown, Ohio

A Place in the Family

In this activity, students draw on personal experience to generate details and examples for an expository writing assignment.

Start the activity with a discussion on birth order. Bring in articles, poems, short stories, or other materials that treat the topic in either a fictional or factual approach; perhaps assign some of the material to be read prior to the discussion. Select readings with differing points of view and emphasize that there is no one ideal birth order.

Ask students to consider their own order of birth in their family: the youngest child, the oldest, the middle, a twin, or a single child. Have students list three advantages and three disadvantages of their position and jot down examples, details, descriptions, or explanations to develop their point. Do they feel being the oldest child gave them special privileges? Is it difficult being the only girl in a family with four boys? Encourage them to find support for their position in the written material on birth order.

When the lists are complete, have students examine their major points and examples and have them reach a conclusion on their own place in the family. They should determine a thesis statement and plan how they will develop an expository paper expressing this statement (by piling on examples or by building up to the main point) and their conclusion or insight. Any details that do not contribute to the main point are cut. Students use their plan to prepare a rough draft of their expository paper. The introduction can be written at this time or can be written after the main points of the paper are clearly expressed.

Further development of the drafts can take several forms. Students can meet in writing groups to evaluate one another's drafts and to make suggestions, or they can team up with a writing partner. Another alternative is teacher-student conferences, especially when students consider their papers too personal for peer review.

Beverly Haley, Fort Morgan, Colorado

Contrasting Moods

Focusing on contrasting moods of the same setting can encourage students to produce vivid descriptive writing.

I start by bringing in a large selection of pictures that portray natural elements and landscapes. Old calendars are a particularly good source. We discuss how the natural world is subject to constant change and how wide-ranging these changes can be. Then I select one large photograph and have the class work together in the following steps:

1. Identify and list six to ten nouns for objects seen in the picture.
2. Create adjectives and descriptive phrases to modify each of the nouns.
3. Think of a possible change that would alter the appearance of the objects in the picture, such as a rainstorm, a fire, snow, people approaching, or an earthquake.
4. Create a new set of adjectives and descriptive phrases to reflect the changes the objects would undergo.

Following this class discussion, each student selects a picture and follows the same four steps. A chart like the one below helps students to generate details:

Nouns	*Original description*	*Description following change*
sea	placid, calm	rough, angry
boat	gently rocking	violently tossed
clouds	soft, billowy	raging, ominous

I circulate around the classroom as the charts are being made and offer help when it is requested. Once all students have completed their charts, I have them begin on the second part of the assignment: to write a descriptive paragraph of their scene as it appears in the picture and a second paragraph describing the changes they envision in the scene. Most students find the writing goes smoothy since they have already prepared lists of descriptive terms.

Don Shultz, Dana Junior High School, Arcadia, California

What If . . . ?

Students welcome the opportunity to use their imaginations. This activity calls for imaginative thinking, plus it stimulates logical thinking and thinking of consequences of actions.

Present students with an outlandish "what if" statement that will interest them. Here are some examples to get you started:

1. What if all the junk food in the vending machines were replaced by health food snacks?
2. What if everyone were required to come to school on a skateboard?
3. What if you were named principal for a day?

4. What if the school played your favorite radio station on the intercom all day?
5. What if students were not permitted to speak once inside the school building?
6. What if students were required to take just one course each semester?

Write the "what if" statement in the center of the chalkboard and ask students to think of positive and negative effects that might occur as a result. Draw three lines out in different directions from the question and list three of these effects. The skateboard question, for example, might produce the following effects:

1. The school parking lot would be abandoned.
2. Skateboard sales and repair services would boom.
3. People at school would become more physically fit.

Draw three lines out from each of these statements and have students suggest possible effects resulting from these statements. For example, the empty parking lot might result in the following:

1. The parking lot could be used for skateboard races and other sports activities.
2. Car and gas sales would go down.
3. Police patrols of the school grounds could be cut.

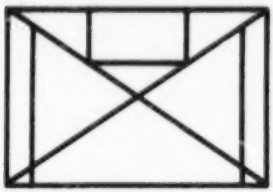
This branching could go on and on, but by now the idea of cause and effect is comfortable for students, details are building, and the outline for an essay is clearly visible. Have each student write an essay taking the "what if" statement to its logical conclusions.

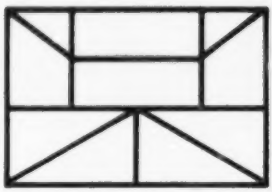
Beverly Haley, Fort Morgan, Colorado

A Lesson in Precise Writing

I use descriptions of geometric designs to demonstrate to students the importance of precise, unambiguous writing.

I start by drawing a set of geometric designs on construction paper. It is important that these figures not resemble any object in particular and that they consist primarily of straight, connected lines. The desired level of difficulty determines how intricate I make the figures. Two easy designs that I have used are shown below.





I hand each student the same drawing or reproduce it on the chalkboard so that all can see it. Working in pairs, students are to write an exact description of how to draw the geometric figure. I suggest how they might begin their descriptions: "Start by holding the paper with the longer sides horizontal. Draw a diagonal line from the upper-right corner to the lower-left corner." The student partners continue the description, watching for ambiguity and adding further detail. I read some of the descriptions aloud to the whole class, and students suggest revisions to clarify the directions.

Then I hand each student a different geometric design and ask students to prepare precise descriptions, this time working individually. Students exchange descriptions with their partners and try to reproduce the figure from the directions without looking at the drawing. Any mistakes in the drawings show just where the descriptions are unclear.

This lesson in precise writing is further demonstrated by having one student read his or her description aloud while several students try to recreate the figure at the chalkboard.

Ron Thurston, Fort Collins, Colorado

The Working World

This activity helps students to develop interviewing skills and to think about career choices as they prepare a dramatic monologue and a newspaper feature story.

I read aloud several accounts from Studs Terkel's *Working*, a collection of narratives written by Terkel to describe his subjects' jobs, which range from stockbroker to coach to telephone operator to steelworker. I select his descriptions of people representing a variety of occupations and look for those with particularly insightful remarks about their jobs or working in general. I bring in newspaper feature articles about people in different occupations and invite students to bring in clippings also.

Then I assign students to read selections from *Working* and some of the newspaper clippings. Our discussion focuses on the reasons people give or imply for choosing their careers and on the joys and disappointments they encounter. We talk about the specific questions the newspaper reporters would have asked to write their stories. The students brainstorm to develop a list of probing questions.

Next I assign students to interview two working people: one in a career that the student is considering for himself or herself and the other in a field the student has never considered. I allow sufficient time for students to schedule their interviews and help them locate suitable subjects. Before their interviews, students go over the class list of questions and add appropriate questions for the particular people they will interview. If sufficient equipment is available, students might tape-record their interviews and later transcribe the comments. If not, they should recopy their questions allowing sufficient room on the paper to enter the responses.

Once all the interviews have taken place, students bring in their notes for two in-class writing assignments. First they select one of their two subjects for a dramatic monologue similar to Terkel's in which they assume the voice of the person interviewed. The second writing is a newspaper feature story. We discuss "leads," organization, and how to decide which information to use before students write their own feature stories.

I might have students read their dramatic monologues aloud to the class, or I might display them with the feature stories. Students enjoy reading the profiles and gain some insight into different careers as well.

David J. Hibbs, Morgan Park Academy, Chicago, Illinois

Creative Dialogues

Students may read written dialogue without fully realizing the role it plays in the development of a short story or novel. I have my students prepare written conversations between two speakers as a way to explore using dialogue to develop characterization, create conflict, and advance the plot.

I begin by discussing good examples of dialogue in the short stories and novels we have recently read and by reviewing the punctuation and para-

graphing of direct speech. Then I ask students to compose short dialogues of 100 to 150 words for three of the following situations:

1. *First speaker:* teenager
   Second speaker: parent
   Topic: use of the family car
2. *First speaker:* middle-aged woman
   Second speaker: young child
   Topic: your choice
3. *First speaker:* Goldilocks
   Second speaker: your choice
   Topic: Equal Rights Amendment
4. *First speaker:* your choice
   Second speaker: your choice
   Topic: a book you've recently read
5. *First speaker:* Michael Jackson
   Second speaker: Prince
   Topic: your choice
6. *First speaker:* your choice
   Second speaker: yourself
   Topic: your choice
7. *First speaker:* Zelda Zacchariah
   Second speaker: Ramrod O'Reilly
   Topic: your choice
8. *First speaker:* an English teacher
   Second speaker: a math teacher
   Topic: your choice

Students are to develop the two characters through dialogue and to create a conflict between the two. I also encourage the creative enthusiasm that is the framework of all good writing.

Ian Waldron, North Toronto Collegiate Institute, Toronto, Ontario

Take This Word and Use It

I have found that a simple activity based on one word can introduce a short grammatical unit while the sample sentences are still fresh in students' minds. The activity uses only the first or last ten minutes of class on two days and can be repeated at regular or irregular intervals throughout the course.

I pass out small slips of paper, just large enough for one sentence. I select a common word (such as *yellow* or *right*) and have students write a sentence using that word. Before the next class period, I read through the sentences and select those that illustrate good and bad aspects of writing that I want to point out to the class. Such features might include:

the word used as different parts of speech
sentence fragments and run-ons
varying word order
problems with spelling and grammar
variety in sentence construction
kinds of sentences, such as simple or complex, imperative or interrogative, balanced or periodic

Since the sentences are turned in anonymously, no one feels embarrassed when I suggest corrections, and feedback on this short assignment is nearly immediate.

Beverly Haley, Fort Morgan, Colorado

The Third Drawer

To aid my students in the editing stage of their writing, I have devised a system known as "The Third Drawer." Students like it because it frees them from grammar drill lessons and provides an individual approach to their writing problems.

Student writing folders are stored in the top two drawers of my filing cabinet. Each student's folder contains a sheet explaining the proofreading marks I use as I read through their compositions and spot such problems as comma faults, dangling modifiers, and sentence fragments. The folders also contain a grid sheet with a list of the proofreading marks down the left side and spaces across the top to list the writing assignments that they do through the year. As students edit and revise their own writings, they tally the number and kinds of errors they are making. The grid helps them discover which type of errors they are making repeatedly.

Then they turn to the third drawer. In this drawer I keep a separate folder for each of the problem areas identified on the sheet explaining my proofreading marks. The folders contain worksheets designed to help students practice spotting these problems and correcting their errors. If, for example, a student needs help remedying certain comma faults, he or she pulls out the comma-fault folder and works through the appropriate set of

worksheets, which are then turned in to me for correction. This method gives me the opportunity to discover patterns of errors, and I can write specific notes on the worksheets to instruct students and—if necessary—have them correct errors they've made. Students are given credit points for the extra work they do to correct their mistakes. I can also praise students for their efforts to work on their individual weaknesses.

When I evaluate the writing folders to see the students' progress, the worksheets are there to remind me of the conscientious efforts students have made to correct their mistakes. The worksheets also remind students that they have conquered another obstacle to good writing.

Marlene Corbett, Area Writing Instructor, Charlotte, North Carolina

Paper-Clip Paragraphs

Here's a simple activity that I use with my basic English students to demonstrate descriptive writing.

I give each student a paper clip, which students are to bend and twist into any shape they desire. Then each student writes a paragraph describing his or her paper clip, concentrating on its new shape and its possible use. When the writing is complete, both the paragraphs and the paper clips are turned in to me. I hand back a description to each student, making certain that no one gets his or her own paragraph. Students spend a few minutes reading the descriptions; then I set all the paper clips on a table at the front of the room and have students find the paper clip that matches the description I've handed to them. One by one, students read their new description aloud as I hold up the matching paper clip. We discuss the adjectives and other descriptive details used in each paragraph, and the class determines whether the paragraph and the paper clip match. And since the original authors are anonymous, I find the paragraphs often provide a good introduction to a brief grammatical unit or to a discussion of common writing problems.

Claire H. Shepard, Baldwin High School, Baldwin, Georgia

Noun Poetry

The following activity can be an effective introduction to a poetry-writing unit. Having an established structure means students need not worry about format and can concentrate on producing descriptive language.

I bring in a pile of old newspapers and magazines or have students supply them. Each student selects the picture of a person, place, or thing and

glues or tapes it to a sheet of paper. Then students produce a descriptive poem according to the following format:

Line 1: Choose a noun that describes the person, place, or thing you have selected.

Line 2: Describe this noun with two adjectives joined by the word *and* or *but*.

Line 3: Use a verb form and an adverb to show this noun in a typical action.

Line 4: Think up a comparison beginning with the word *as* or *like* to show a special quality this noun has.

Line 5: Use a phrase beginning with *if only* to express a wish regarding this noun.

Here is a sample poem written by a student:

Fireman
Strong and fearless
Fighting courageously
As brave as a gladiator
If only I could be a hero

Peggy Reynolds, Memphis, Tennessee

Remember?

While students may not be eager to tackle a poetry-writing assignment, the opportunity to talk about their childhood may overcome their aversion to writing verse. As they recollect their earlier years, they bring to mind the sensory details and images that they'll use in their poems.

Students start by making a sensory inventory of their elementary school memories—the squeak of new tennis shoes on the highly polished gym floor, the jangling bracelets Ms. Barton always wore, the peculiar smell of wet rubber boots placed too close to the register.

I cover the chalkboard with a large sheet of butcher paper titled "When I Went to Elementary School," and each student contributes one memory to a collective poem. This warm-up poem might be sent to an elementary class, which could compose and return a series of one-line futuristic thoughts titled "When I Get to High School."

Next, students use their list of memories to produce individual poems containing specific sensory images. I have students make their first line the title and the last line a summary of the somewhat scattered memories, and I encourage them to use conversational but concise language.

Here is an example of a poem written by one of my twelfth-grade students:

KEN BIGLER WAS THE CUTEST BOY
in the whole school
Wes Jensen wore his new
hat in April that's when he
got his hair cut
once Miss Summers made us
touch cow eyes for our science
project all the girls screamed they
were so gushy just like a sponge
Brian Hoskason always chased
me at recess and tried to
kiss me but I ran fast to the
tricky bars and yelled Kings
I had to stay there all recess
long because he wouldn't leave me
alone Kathy and I got in trouble
for playing on the stage during
recess the principal was really
mad he said we could get hurt and
no one would find us
David Dawson wouldn't love
me because I didn't love him
in fourth grade so I felt sorry
and sent him love letters said I
would always love him I still think
sixth grade was the funnest
grade of all.

Sue Swanson

Richard Harmston, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Ballad-Starters

The ballad, with its simple narrative and its sentimental lyrics, provides an approach to poetry writing that many students enjoy. The short stanzas and uncomplicated rhyme schemes make the ballad format fairly easy to produce, and the romantic, often melodramatic, story line is entertaining.

After we read numerous ballads—and perhaps listen to recorded ballads—we discuss their characteristic themes and forms. Then students are ready to write their own ballads. I bring in old newspapers and have stu-

dents skim them for suitable "ballad-starters"—columns containing advice to the lovelorn and human-interest stories are particularly good, and often sports features and obituaries can also be used. Students should be on the lookout for the scorned lover who takes his own life, the young woman who dies shortly before her wedding day, or the sinking of a ship with all aboard lost, and they should be prepared to use their imaginations to dramatize more mundane events. Next comes the writing. Students find they can rely on their ballad-starters for inspiration, vocabulary, and details as they produce their own ballads.

Georgianna Robbins, Hillsboro High School, Hillsboro, Ohio

Classroom Literary Magazine

As the end of the school year approaches, have students select a few favorite pieces of their writings for inclusion in a classroom literary magazine. Even if your school publishes a literary magazine, a classroom collection allows everyone to participate.

Throughout the school year advise students to hold onto the poems, plays, essays, and short stories they write as assignments. Several weeks before the term ends, have students read through these papers and choose two or three for a classroom literary magazine. Suggest that students might want to make one final revision of their writings prior to publication—a step that many follow because they know their work will be read by their peers. Then students submit a clean copy of each piece of writing.

Photocopy enough booklets to distribute to the class, perhaps including a cover prepared by one of the students. The collection gives each student recognition for his or her writing and provides students with an opportunity to learn more about their classmates' thoughts and feelings.

Marcia S. Morrill, Southwestern High School, Hanover, Indiana

English 11 in Retrospect

Near the end of the year, I like to have students reflect upon the writing they have done throughout the course. The assignment helps them to assess the progress they have made, to articulate and synthesize what they have learned, and to establish personal goals for improvement.

I select a topic that will generate student self-assessment. Suggestions include:

1. What techniques or skills in writing have I learned that I can transfer from one composition to another or from one subject to another?

2. Can the ability to write well be acquired, or it is an inborn talent?
3. How can I further improve my writing?
4. English 11 in Retrospect (or, Looking Ahead)

Students are asked to think objectively about their own writing—what difficulties or problems they have, possible reasons for these difficulties, what they have learned or what they have developed confidence about, what improvements they hope to make in the future. Their self-assessments are particularly effective when compared to a similar assessment made at the beginning of the year. Students realize the progress they have made, and I get feedback on what students have learned during my course.

Carroll Viera, Tennessee Tech University, Cookeville, Tennessee

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road, Urbana, Illinois 61801

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